

English 4385-01, Senior Seminar: Our Monsters, Ourselves

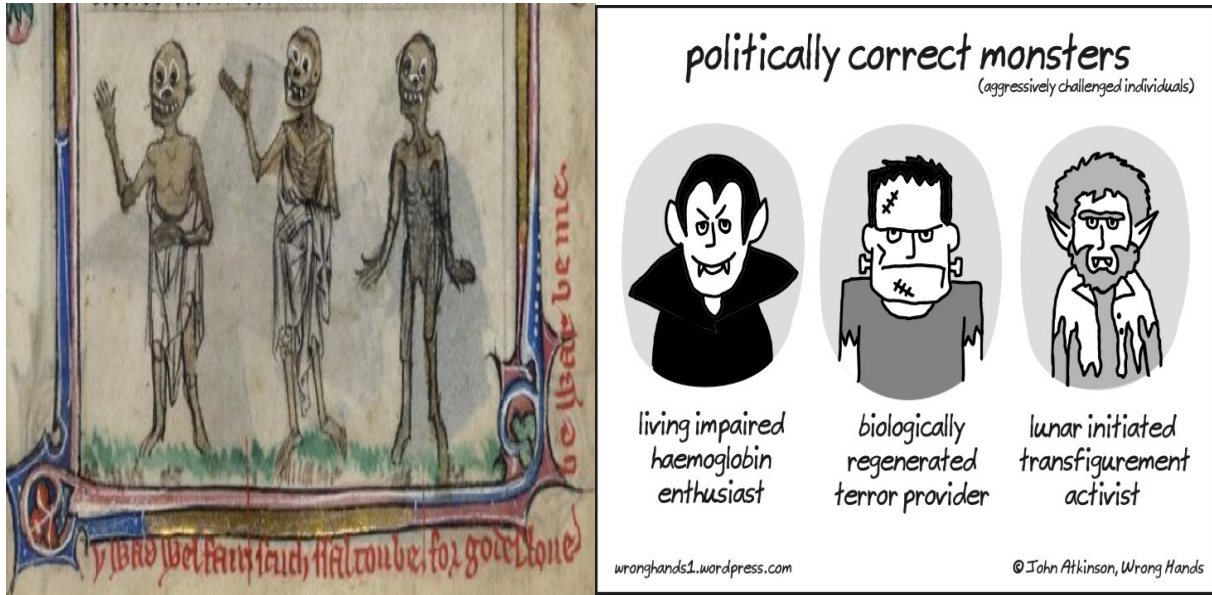
Fall 2016 * M/W 3:30-4:45 * TLC 1204

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Office Hours: W 5-6; Th 10-3; alternate/virtual meetings available by appt.



Course Description

Humanity has a long history of defining itself through what it is not. From the reanimated corpses of medieval manuscripts to the moody bloodsuckers of modern fiction, creatures that are deemed not quite human have contributed meaningfully to the ongoing conversation about what it means or should mean to be human. In this capstone course for the English, we will explore the implications of this vexed dichotomy through a variety of theoretical, historical, and cultural lenses, using reanimated corpses as our “case studies” in monstrosity. You will then design a research project of your own, choosing relevant primary and secondary sources to help you raise, as well as offer potential answers to, provocative questions about the nature and function of monsters.

Course Objectives

- Students will understand and apply select theoretical and practical issues in the discipline of literary studies.
- Students will become conversant with representative texts and a selected issue in literary history that allows for the integration of the aims of the discipline.
- Students will develop the ability to work both independently and collaboratively toward the publication of an anthology of essays by class members.

- Students will propose, research and execute a substantive literary argument appropriate to the seminar topic.
- Students will be able to make effective oral presentations, both individual and collaborative.
- Students will participate in an end-of-semester exit interview to assess how this course and the major have served their professional goals.

Program Goals

According to the revised English Program Learning Outcomes, English majors will be able to:

- Understand and assess the traditions, conventions, and contexts associated with the study of the English language and its literatures.
- Apply critical thinking skills to the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information and ideas from diverse oral, written, and/or visual sources.
- Conduct research, develop organizational strategies, and compose professional documents using the academic conventions of English Studies as a discipline.

Required Texts

Asma, Stephen. *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN 9780199798094.

Le Fanu, Sheridan. *Carmilla*. Ed. Kathleen Costello-Sullivan. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013. ISBN 9780815633112.

Matheson, Richard. *I Am Legend*. New York: Tor Books, 1995. ISBN 9780312865047.

Supplementary readings are available online or via CourseDen

You'll also need to be able to view "Mulder and Scully Meet the Were-Monster" (*X-files*, Season 10, episode 3, which you can stream through Amazon or Hulu) and *Night of the Living Dead* (dir. George Romero, 1968, which you can stream through Amazon or watch at the library).

Required Work

Fuller descriptions of your written assignments be posted to CourseDen.

- *Daily Participation* (15%): You are expected to not only do the assigned readings, but also to come to class prepared to discuss said readings. This does not mean that you have to have everything "figured out" ahead of time; questions and clarifications are perfectly reasonable ways to contribute to class discussions, though you need to make an effort to share your opinions and insights too if you want higher than a "C" in this component of your grade. Challenge yourself to talk at least once a week if not once a class. Bringing both the texts we'll be discussing and the notes you took while reading those texts to class is a good starting point for being prepared for class discussions. If I get the sense that you are not reading, I will incorporate reading quizzes into this component of your grade. I will post your participation grade twice: around midterm and at the end of the semester.
- *Reading Reflections and Leading Class Discussion* (10%): At several points during the semester, you will be asked to write a short response to the readings we have covered in class. While not formal essays, these reflections should be grounded in specific examples from the readings and class discussions, exhibiting your ability to think critically about

both and extend the conversations being had in a written format. Everyone is responsible for writing all reflections. You will also be asked—with several of your peers—to lead class discussion based on your reflections and additional preparatory work that you do as a group once during the semester.

- *Analytical Paper* (15%): a 4 to 5 page paper focusing on the close, analytical reading of a text or texts from the first half of the semester utilizing the theoretical framework of monstrosity.
- *Debating Monstrosity Presentation* (10%): You will design an 8 to 10 minute presentation on a text (book, movie, game, graphic novel, etc.) that you are thinking about using in your seminar paper because it evokes the concept of monstrosity in provocative and insightful ways. Each presentation should be accompanied by an effectively designed visual aid and will be followed by a brief Q&A. Working on this assignment, and listening to the presentations of your peers, is an important step towards the development of a successful seminar topic, so come prepared to be an active listener/question-asker.
- *Seminar Paper* (50%): a 15 to 16 page, research-based essay about the function of monstrosity in the text of your choosing, which need not be one that we covered in class. All topics do, however, need to be approved by me before you begin the research process, so start thinking about your interests along these lines early. This paper is the culmination of your study in this seminar and, in many ways, the major as a whole, which is why it contributes heavily to your final grade in this class. As part of this assignment you will be expected to meet a variety of preliminary deadlines (proposal, annotated bibliography, drafts, etc.) before submitting your final product for publication, which, taken together, will be worth 10% of this part of your grade.

Attendance

You are expected to attend class daily and be on time. I take roll by asking the class a specific “attendance question”; if you show up after I am done with roll you will be considered late. You may miss three classes with no questions asked. Absences four and five will result in your final grade dropping by two percentage points. Six or more absences will result in you not passing this class. Three late arrivals count as one absence. Leaving class early without permission also counts as an absence. If you are asked to leave class for any reason, that too will count as an absence. Should you miss a class at any point in the semester, it is your responsibility to talk to your peers to figure out what you missed. In-class work cannot be made up except for cases of documented emergency and missing multiple in-class discussions will negatively impact your participation grade.

Deadlines and Submitting Assignments

All of your work is due on the days and times indicated by the schedule below. You will submit your work electronically via CourseDen (or email if there happens to be server trouble). Your grade will drop by two grade scales (4 points) for every day that it is late, including weekends. If you are going to be absent the day that something is due, it remains your responsibility to make sure that your work is turned in on time. Failure to do so will result in your grade dropping. If you are having trouble with an assignment, come and talk to me **well ahead** of that assignment’s due date; I do not grant last minute extensions for assignments nor can I be of much help the night before an assignment is due. It is your responsibility to regularly back up your work and to

ensure that the submitted product is formatted correctly. “My computer ate my file” and “I thought I uploaded the file” are not accepted excuses for late work, so I strongly suggest you save your work to a USB drive regularly (backing your work up on Google Drive or another cloud service might also be advisable) and double check that ALL of your submissions to CourseDen go through as planned. If you have questions or concerns about CourseDen, you should contact the Distance Learning office (<http://uwgonline.westga.edu/>) directly.

Grading and Revision Policies

Grades are based on student performance on each assignment. Simply turning in every assignment does not guarantee that you will receive the grade you want on those assignments, nor does earning a “good” grade on one assignment guarantee that you will earn a similar grade on the next assignment. The grading scale and standards I use are detailed in the “Grading Scale and Guidelines for Formal Assignments” document on CourseDen. I do not offer extra credit for this class. I do accept revisions of analytical papers **if you meet with me** to discuss your plans for revision **within a week** of me handing the graded paper back to you. You should come to this meeting with your **revision plan/goals typed up or written out**. Revised papers do not necessarily earn higher grades, but I do guarantee that your grade will not drop in any way should you decide to attempt a revision. If you are revising a paper that was penalized for plagiarism, your old grade and your new grade will be averaged to determine the final grade that you will receive.

University Policies and Student Rights/Responsibilities

Please carefully review the following Common Language for all university course syllabi: http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf. It contains important material pertaining to university policies and responsibilities. These statements are updated as federal, state, university, and accreditation standards change, so you should review the information each semester.

Academic Honesty

The act of plagiarism—claiming someone else’s ideas, language, images, or other original materials as your own without giving full credit to your source—is a serious offense. As members of an academic community, it is important that we engage in responsible and honest communication with one another. Plagiarism, whether accidental or intentional, will result in a failing grade for assignment and will, as a result, negatively impact your overall grade. Repeat offenders will fail the course and might be subjected to additional action by the University.

If you are unclear about how to cite a source, ask me **before** you turn your work in. Sources you should consult before talking to me include:

- The MLA Handbook you purchased for this class.
- The department's website: <http://www.westga.edu/%7Eengdept/Plagiarism/index.html>
- The Bedford/St. Martin student site:
http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/rewriting2e/#t_526483
- The research and citation section of Purdue’s online writing lab:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

Submitting someone else's work as your own, resubmitting your own work done for another class, or collaborating with peers on individual assignments are also forms of academic dishonesty that will result in failing grades for the assignment in question.

Accessibility Services

UWG adheres to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that accommodations be made to make programs accessible for people with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability, please make sure to register at the Accessibility Services Office and provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Request as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services Office is located at 123 Row Hall. You may call them at 678-839-6428 or visit their website at <http://www.westga.edu/counseling/4486.php>.

Classroom Environment

Since everyone is expected to participate in class, it is important that you all feel comfortable doing so. Some of the content we will be discussing involves topics or perspectives with which you might not agree or feel wholly comfortable, and that is okay. Differing viewpoints are welcome in class discussions; however, disrespectful comments against specific individuals or groups will not be tolerated under any circumstances. In the event that such a statement is made, the speaker will be asked to leave class immediately and will be marked absent for the day. Disagreeing with someone is one thing, disrespecting or attacking him or her is another—do not do it. On a related note, it is disrespectful to both me and your fellow classmates to let your cell phones ring during our time together, so please turn off your phones before class. Other portable electronics should, likewise, be turned off during class unless you are given permission to use them for a specific project. If I see you text messaging, emailing, checking facebook, or doing work for another class, I will ask you to leave and mark you as absent.

Additional Help

I am always happy to meet with you outside of class to discuss readings, your progress in the class, or any other questions/concerns you might have. I will be in my office during the office hours listed at the top of this syllabus. On the occasion that I need to reschedule office hours, you will be given as much advanced notice about these changes as possible. If you are unable to come to office hours, let me know and we'll figure out another time to meet that is convenient for us both. I am also happy to answer specific questions over email and will do so as quickly as I can. That said, please don't panic if you don't hear from me right away, especially if you send your email at, say, midnight. If, however, I haven't responded in 24 hours, feel free to send a follow up email.

The University Writing Center is another excellent resource that I encourage you to take advantage of as all writing benefits from multiple sets of eyes; indeed, professional writers workshop their pieces all of the time. You may go to the Writing Center at any stage in your writing process. For more information or to make an appointment, call 678-839-6513, visit TLC 1201, or email writing@westga.edu.

UWG Cares

College can sometimes feel stressful. Please know that everyone at UWG is committed to supporting you to the best of our abilities; we've been in your shoes. If at any point during the semester you or someone you know starts to feel overwhelmed, I'd encourage you to call the

Counseling Center (it's free and anything you discuss can remain confidential) at 678-839-6428. If you need me to help you find a particular support service or walk with you to an office, I am happy to do that; you need to know, however, that I am legally obligated to report any incident of sexual assault. If you are worried about someone who does not seem to want to ask for help, visit <http://www.westga.edu/uwgcares/> to file an anonymous report on that person. In case of emergency, don't be afraid to call national help lines, like that for the national suicide prevention lifeline at 800-273-8255 or the national sexual assault hotline at 800-656-4673.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments (due the date on they are listed)

This syllabus is a general plan for the course and might be modified as the semester progresses to meet course objectives and address the needs of the class. Most (if not all) of the changes made will be in consultation with the class as a whole. I will announce any changes made in class before sending an updated syllabus.

Week One: Introductions

Aug. 10	Course overview: establishing expectations. <i>Email me your top two choices for leading discussion by midnight tonight.</i>
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Week Two: Defining Monstrosity (and Human-hood)

Aug. 15	Cultural and Historical Perspectives <i>Homework due:</i> Cohen, "Monster Culture" (e-reserve); Asma, "Introduction"
Aug. 17	Interrogating Assumptions <i>Homework due:</i> watch "Mulder and Scully Meet the Were-Monster"

Week Three: Monster as Metaphor

Aug. 22	Projecting Inner Fears Outward <i>Reflection One due; Group One leads discussion</i> <i>Homework due:</i> Asma, Chapters 12 and 13; Kaplan "Cursed by a Bite" (Chapter 7 of pdf on e-reserve—skip chapter 6)
Aug. 24	Enigmatic identification <i>Homework due:</i> del Toro and Hogan, "Why Vampires Never Die" (e-reserve); Klosterman, "My Zombie, Myself" (e-reserve); <i>Carmilla</i> pp. 1-54

Week Four: Monstrous Desires

Aug. 29	What women want <i>Reflection Two due; Group two leads discussion</i> <i>Homework due:</i> finish <i>Carmilla</i> ; Fox, " <i>Carmilla</i> and the Politics of Indistinguishability" (pp.110-21 in your edition of <i>Carmilla</i>); Kilpatrick, "The Age of Sorrow" (e-reserve)
Aug. 31	Reaping what we sow <i>Homework due:</i> Asma, Chapter 11; <i>I am Legend</i> , Part One

Week Five: Monstrous Technologies

Sept. 5	No class: Labor Day
Sept. 7	Careful what you wish for <i>Reflection Three due; Group Three leads discussion</i> <i>Homework due:</i> finish <i>I am Legend</i> ; Hamilton, "Those Who Seek Forgiveness" (e-reserve)

Week Six: Monstrous Societies

Sept. 12	The Isms of Survival <i>Homework due:</i> watch <i>Night of the Living Dead</i> ; King, “Home Delivery” (e-reserve); Asma, Chapter 14
Sept. 14	Looking in the Mirror <i>Homework due:</i> Palwick, “Beautiful Stuff”; Tallerman, “Stockholm Syndrome”; Castro, “Dead Like Me”; McIntosh “Followed” <i>Analytical Paper Due by noon tomorrow (9/15)</i>

Week Seven: Looking Back, Looking Forward

Sept. 19	Early Archetypes <i>Reflection Four due; Group Four leads discussion</i> <i>Homework due:</i> Asma, Chapter 7; <i>Beowulf</i> excerpt (e-reserve)
Sept. 21	Future Archetypes <i>Homework due:</i> Asma, Chapter 15 and “Epilogue”; watch “True Skin” (https://vimeo.com/51138699)

Week Eight: Presentations

Sept. 26	Presentations
Sept. 28	Presentations <i>Last day to withdraw from class with a “W” is 9/30 at midnight.</i>

Week Nine: Launching Your Seminar Papers

Oct. 3	Developing your topic/framework workshop. <i>Homework due:</i> come to class with questions about/reactions to what you learned about the topics presented last week.
Oct. 5	Post Peer-Review Discussion: what do you want this anthology to look like? <i>Drafts of formal proposals due for peer review—bring two copies to class and submit to CourseDen for credit.</i>

Week Ten: Working Your Sources

Oct. 10	Workshop: evaluating and using sources.
Oct. 12	Post Peer-Review Workshop/Discussion: TBD by class. <i>Revised proposals and first three annotations due for peer review—bring two copies to class and submit to CourseDen for credit.</i>

Week Eleven: Growing Your Perspective

Oct. 17	Workshop: Giving and responding to constructive criticism.
Oct. 19	<i>Finalized proposal/completed annotated bibliography due (six sources total) for peer review—bring two copies to class and submit to CourseDen for credit and feedback from me.</i>

Week Twelve: Meetings

Oct. 24	No class: mandatory meetings with me.
Oct. 26	No class: mandatory meetings with me.

Week Thirteen: Entering the Conversation

Oct. 31	Partial draft workshop: <i>bring two copies of the first five pages of your draft and submit to CourseDen for credit.</i>
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Nov. 3	Revision workshop: <i>bring a copy of your draft to class.</i>
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Week Fourteen:

Nov. 7	Finalize Anthology design
Nov. 9	Workshop: TBD by class

Week Fifteen: Entering the Final Stretch

Nov. 14	Peer review of complete drafts: <i>bring two copies of complete or close-to-complete drafts to class (minimum 10 pages) and submit to CourseDen for credit.</i>
Nov. 16	Editing workshop: <i>bring copy of your draft to class.</i>

Week Sixteen: Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 21	No class.
Nov. 23	No class.

Week Seventeen: Conclusions

Nov. 28	Peer editing workshop— <i>bring two copies of complete, revised draft to class.</i>
Nov. 30	Course Evaluations and Wrap Up. <i>Seminar Papers due by noon tomorrow (12/1).</i>

Final “Exam”: Wednesday, December 7th, 2-4pm (we’ll decide collectively if you want to meet for this)